



HIGH SCHOOL!

A Periodical for California's High School Educators

Spring 2007

A Message from the Superintendent

Theme Relevance

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Making learning relevant to the lives of high school students is paramount in keeping them interested, motivated, and prepared for postsecondary experiences. As teenagers become more independent, they have the means (e.g., driver's license), the need to earn money to pay for a car and help with family finances, and the desire to seek excitement and life outside the classroom.

While we continue our commitment to provide a standards-based education for all students, it is critical that we deliver rigorous curriculum in a way that meets the high school student's interests and need for expression, connects to life skills, and prepares the individual for college and a career. School must be the place where students want to be.

Research shows that a standards-based education is most effective when it is delivered in a manner that is relevant to students. By incorporating relevance into academic and elective courses, teachers encourage students to discover their talents, develop their dreams, and explore possible careers. A high school education focused on relevance also allows students to have a voice in their education and to engage in projects and discussions about issues that matter the most to them.

Many California high schools are leading the way in engaging students' interests and abilities while reinforcing learning. Teachers are providing courses that relate students' daily life to future careers and higher

education in the context of a broader community and the world. Technology, visual and performing arts, and foreign languages and culture are being incorporated across the curriculum, keeping students engaged and connected. School schedules include electives and interest-based exploratory courses that emphasize career skill acquisition and cultivate students' curiosity and creativity. School programs are being offered that provide students with real-life, hands-on experiences that meet students' interests and relate to their future pursuit of postsecondary education or career-technical education options or both.

This issue of *High School!* features two outstanding high schools that have made relevance a priority. Del Campo High School makes education relevant through a successful Advancement Via Individual Determination program that provides students with the skills and confidence to "tackle" rigorous courses toward achieving their goal of entering a four-year university. At Golden Sierra High School, staff members promote relevance through a sequence of courses that develop individual skills and provide group experiences through team projects to prepare students for a future in the building and construction trades.

I applaud those high schools that have recognized the need to make learning relevant to their students and have developed model programs that keep students in school and on the path of lifelong learning. ©

JACK O'CONNELL

About This Issue

Welcome to the spring 2007 issue of *High School!* This edition focuses on relevance—providing an educational experience that is germane to the lives of high school students and preparing them for the real world: college, careers, and civic responsibilities.

To make education relevant in today's high schools, maturing students need to connect what they learn in the classroom with its application to real life. High school teachers are making the curriculum relevant by infusing learning with technology, visual and performing arts, career/real-world connections, service- and project-based learning, and civic and multicultural experiences. Before- and after-school programs are providing additional opportunities for students to participate in socially relevant activities that satisfy their curiosity, keep them interested in their education, and support academic achievement.

In 2004 State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell initiated the California P-16 Council to explore ways to better coordinate education in California and improve student performance at all levels—preschool, elementary school, middle school, high school, and college. In its first year the council sought answers to essential questions related to the high school experience, including one that asked “[How do we make school relevant to students?](#)” The council approved two recommendations: expand the number of California Partnership Academies; and create a statewide network of educators, business, community, and labor organizations to link the state's math curriculum with the real-world workplace.

The lead article, “Civic Literacy and the Civic Mission of Schools,” by Cricket F. L. Kidwell, Ed.D., describes the national movement of educators to focus on civic literacy and transform today's students into skilled and informed twenty-first century citizens. Dr. Kidwell discusses a pilot project under way in ten schools promoting a new approach to civic education. One of the pilot schools—Foothill High School—is a school in rural northern California using an interdisciplinary approach to implement a schoolwide civic literacy program designed to build students' skills.

This edition also highlights two California high schools that are providing twenty-first century learning experiences to prepare students for the global economy. Del Campo High School has taken its [Advancement Via Individual Determination](#) (AVID) program to new heights with exceptional results. Every member of its first AVID graduating class was accepted to a four-year university. The Ultimate Cutting Edge, the name of the construction technology program at Golden Sierra High School, illustrates how a small school can get big results by focusing on relevant training and experience. Hands-on courses prepare students for successful careers in the construction industry.

“Is Your School Library Relevant to Twenty-First Century Learning?” draws attention to the transformation of yesterday's school library into tomorrow's library media center. The article spotlights how school library media centers are instrumental in bringing relevance to the high school learning experience and offers a list of key features of a twenty-first century school library.

“The Relevance of Counseling in High School” discusses the important role counselors can play in keeping teenagers interested in school and inspired to do well in high school and beyond. The author discusses the new funding available for grades seven through twelve to increase the number of counselors for middle and high schools and provide additional services to students, particularly to those struggling in school.

This issue's “Worth a Click” column has links to resources and information that can help educators bring relevance to school and make learning matter to students. ©

Civic Literacy and the Civic Mission of Schools

by Cricket F. L. Kidwell, Ed.D.

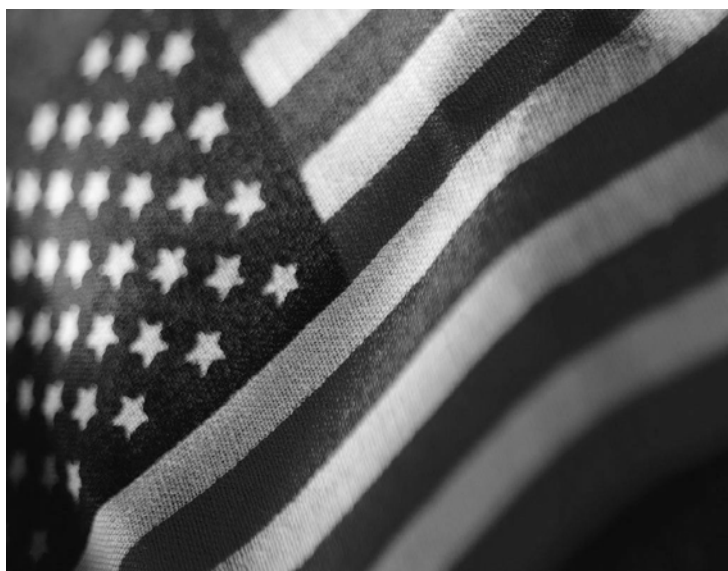
This article was originally published in the National Social Studies Supervisors Association (NSSSA) journal, the NSSSA Leader Spring 2006. It is reprinted here with permission.

A national movement that invokes renewed interest in civic literacy has emerged and is gaining strength. The Civic Mission of Schools campaign encourages educators around the country to examine existing practice and instructional strategies in an assessment of how civic education goals are being met in our schools at all grade levels. Civic literacy is one critical aspect of civic education that addresses the skills needed for citizenship development as well as the connections to existing standards in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and critical thinking skills. At a time when voter disenfranchisement is increasing and voter turnout levels are decreasing, civic education is a critical issue for our schools, our citizens, and our future. The time has come to re-examine some of our basic practices in preparing our young people to become engaged, productive citizens.

“Civic literacy is an intentional instructional set of goals that provide skill practice, application, and evaluation of civic education issues and content.”

The Civic Mission of Schools movement encourages examination of how schools might progress beyond quantitative assessment data and isolated instructional content to a renewed interest in addressing student learning in a societal context. In teaching our students to become future leaders and engaged citizens, all students should be acquiring the skills of civic literacy. To this end, educators in all regions of the country have begun an intentional and strategic effort in assessing and reviewing current teaching practice of civic literacy or, as is more commonly known in the broad sense, civic education.

Civic literacy should be embraced throughout the educational community without hesitation. We know that the fundamentals of democracy must be taught to each generation, as part of an on-going educational effort that begins with the earliest grades and continues through lifelong learning. We know that helping to create effective citizens for the 21st century requires a convergence of skills, knowledge, dispositions, and understanding of democratic practices, principles, and concepts. As most schools and districts across the country have adopted mission statements that clearly define citizenship or civic education as a primary objective of the educational process, civic literacy today is a mandate and high quality civic education is a moral obligation.



Civic literacy is an intentional instructional set of goals that provide skill practice, application, and evaluation of civic education issues and content. The term itself, civic literacy, draws attention to both the literacy movement in general and to the focus on skills as a part of the civic education curriculum package. Although civic education advocates are united in their understanding of the need for a strong civic knowledge base through history and government classes that focus on content, available curriculum resources have been less attentive to the

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development of cognitive and participatory skills. This is particularly true in educational climates that emphasize testing data and standardized tests to the detriment of class activities such as structured debate, analysis of current events, understanding of judicial review of contemporary issues, and student-initiated projects. The civic literacy curriculum represents a coherent curriculum effort that addresses higher level thinking skills, informed decision-making practices, evaluation of information, participatory skills, and civic engagement, and understanding of the broad implications of political, economic, and social issues. Civic literacy is a direct response against attitudes of alienation and distrust of government, disengagement of youth, and disconnectedness between school, community, and life skills.

A project sponsored by the California Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools in California and the Constitutional Rights Foundation has selected ten high schools to examine, within the school setting, how to adopt a stronger and more effective civic mission within their schools. Foothill High School of Palo Cedro, a rural comprehensive high school of approximately 2000 students in the far northern part of California, was one of the selected schools. A group of six teacher-leaders from across departments and disciplines came together, in the spirit of a professional learning community, to plan and implement a school-wide civic literacy focus.

“Through the two year process of the development of this program at Foothill High School, civic literacy has blossomed.”

The planning at Foothill High School began with a review of the six recommendations of the CIRCLE report, a report of the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) and the Carnegie Corporation of New York. These recommendations for effective civic education, based on research-based scholarship, include

- 1) providing a strong foundation of classroom instructional content in democratic foundations;
- 2) classroom discussion of current events;
- 3) service learning;
- 4) extracurricular activities;
- 5) increased use and quality of student voice in school governance; and
- 6) classroom simulations such as mock trial, mock congressional hearings, debate, and other projects.

As teachers at Foothill High School began to discuss the recommendations, they assessed the current program at their school and, simultaneously, began to identify areas and programs that could be improved or implemented. From the new ideas generated, a school-wide plan emerged that included development of a teacher resource packet, monthly themes around civic education topics, formation of a student activist group, development of literature and a website, and numerous presentations to community and school groups. The teacher resource packet included articles and resources for increasing and improving classroom discussion, civic education themes and topics, service learning project development, simulation activities, and civic education in general. The monthly themes included topics such as rights and responsibilities, ethics, decision-making, tolerance, civic engagement, volunteerism, voting, justice, authority, and civic virtue. The program emphasized dialogue, questioning skills, and taking and defending a stand on issues.

Through the two year process of the development of this program at Foothill High School, civic literacy has blossomed. Students have expressed increased interest in current events and school governance. Students have become increasingly involved in community issues, careers in community leadership, and current events. Teachers have become interested in cross-discipline efforts centered on civic education themes and projects. Parents and school board members have become more aware of civic education goals.

The planning and program development process of Foothill High School can easily be replicated at any school. The three-step planning process includes assessment of current programs, generation of new ideas, and

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developing a plan for implementation. The implementation phase, at times concurrent with the planning phase, includes trying new programs, integrating the civic education themes with existing curriculum, developing classroom resources, and adjusting the planned activities as needed.

To begin your school or district planning process, discussion should focus on the six recommendations of the CIRCLE report. From those activities, the following checklist for program assessment of civic literacy should include the following:

Cognitive and Reasoning Skills

- Development of logical argument (oral and written)
- Persuasive argument development or debate skills
- Multiple perspectives
- Evaluation of information
- Recognition of bias
- Drawing conclusions based on evidence
- Decision making skills
- Analytic and synthesis skills

Foundational Content

- Historical understanding
- Foundations of democracy
- Government structure and institutions
- Constitutional constructs
- Landmark Supreme Court cases
- Political, economic, and geographic knowledge

Participation Skills

- Communication skills
- Formal debate skills
- Consensus-building and compromise
- Working together
- Simulations of institutional processes (e.g. Mock Trial, Mock Congressional Hearings)
- Student voice (school and/or local governance)
- Community involvement
- Volunteerism

Dispositions and Attitudes

- Equity and inclusiveness
- Voting and campaign activism
- Community issues interest and research
- Service learning
- Civic engagement
- Role models and career exploration
- Opportunities for school and community involvement

The CIRCLE report is available at www.civicmissionofschools.org and resources can be obtained from websites such as www.civiced.org or www.crf-usa.org or www.cms-ca.org. A website for student voices on current issues can be accessed at <http://student-voices.org>.

Civic literacy is a noble attempt to address literacy issues from across the disciplines with a focused, coherent, central theme of citizenship. The potential for success increases dramatically with the adoption of student-centered activities and discussion on topics of relevance and importance. The intentional and focused examination of civic literacy within the school setting will generate lively discussion, new perspectives, and great ideas among teachers, students, and all stakeholders in the education of our students. Perhaps most importantly of all, we should aspire to achieve the recognition that the civic education of our students belongs not exclusively to the history-social science departments, but to all who have a part in the development of our citizens and future leaders. ©

About the author

Cricket F. L. Kidwell, Ed.D., serves as the director of Curriculum and Instruction for the Trinity County Office of Education. She can be reached at cfkidwell@tcoek12.org.

Del Campo High School

AVID: Where College Dreams Become a Reality

Del Campo High School
Sacramento County
San Juan Unified School District
4925 Dewey Drive
Fair Oaks, California 95628
Gail Pierce, Principal
Phone: (916) 971-5650

<http://www.sanjuan.edu/schools/delcampo>

2006 School Profile

Community: Urban Fringe of a Large City

Grade Levels: 9-12

Enrollment: 1,753

Student Demographics:

- 5% African-American
- 1% American Indian or Alaska Native
- 2% Asian
- 1% Filipino
- 9% Hispanic or Latino
- 0% Pacific Islander
- 81% White

2006 API: 769 (up 53 points since 1999-00)

2006 AYP: No

Free/Reduced Lunch: 16%

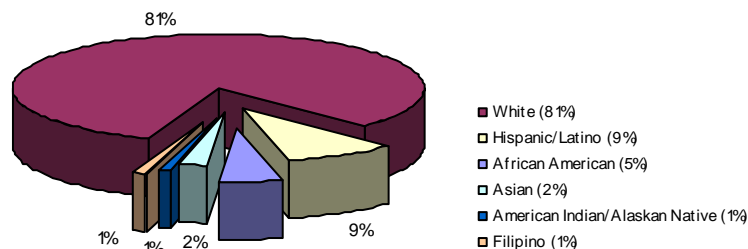
English Learners: 1%

The school met 13 of 14 criteria in 2006 for making adequate yearly progress (AYP).

Del Campo High School provides its estimated 250 AVID students with the skills and confidence to tackle rigorous classes with the support of their AVID teacher, counselor, and administrator working together to ensure the success of students. In fact 100 percent of Del Campo's first graduating AVID class was accepted to four-year universities. The current AVID seniors have similar statistics: an astounding 50 percent are eligible for the University of California and 100 percent are eligible for the California State University.

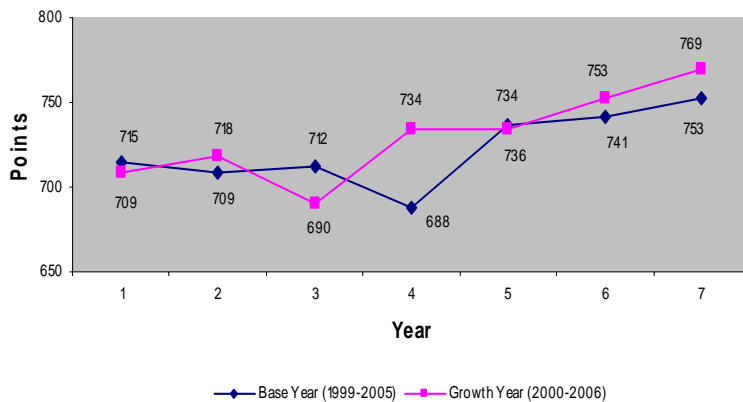
To prepare students for the rigor of honors classes, the school staff spends considerable time in the AVID elective training students to write. The program truly "turned the corner" when so many AVID students passed the honors English challenge test that the school opened another section of the course. Prior to adding the additional section, only some of the eligible AVID students were admitted into honors World History. However, students who were enrolled fared well and were recommended to the Advanced Placement (AP) U.S. History class where the passing rate jumped. Currently, the social science department chair seeks the opinions of the AVID elective teacher and English teacher when placing students in the honors World History class. The school is excited to have opened access to AP courses for **all** Del Campo students.

Del Campo
Demographics



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Del Campo API Trend



Del Campo has allowed its students to prove that AVID does work—that traditionally underrepresented students **can** succeed in rigorous courses if given the proper support. In addition to their strong performance in the classroom, AVID students have broken down barriers by sharing their stories during staff meetings. These presentations not only help staff members recognize AVID students, but they also demonstrate how articulate and confident these students are.

AVID has improved Del Campo because the methodology addresses the needs of a large segment of the school's student population—those who the school has struggled for years to serve more effectively. More of these students now have access to and are enrolled in a – g classes, including honors and AP. Seeing AVID students succeed in rigorous classes is beginning to change the belief system and culture of the school. Students do not have to have high IQs or test scores to succeed in rigorous courses. The school staff members have come to realize that students enrolled in AVID who are motivated and determined can be successful and have the option of attending four-year universities right out of high school. Most teachers are eager to have AVID students in their classrooms as they set a positive tone and are not embarrassed to demonstrate to their peers that "learning is cool."

Over the course of the last few years, the AVID program has been the catalyst for adding new AP classes in math, social studies, science, visual and performing arts, and foreign language as well as increasing the number of sections of honors and AP classes in economics, U.S. history, and English.

Del Campo's Unique AVID Program

The AVID program's most notable success is its yearlong 4 x 4 block schedule. Many schools try to "marry" the AVID program to an academic course, which not only limits the type of teacher who will teach AVID but also restricts students' schedules. Other schools offer AVID for only one term, which can be problematic. If a student has AVID in the fall but has the most rigorous courses in the spring, the student cannot be provided with support. The fact that Del Campo offers a yearlong program with a diverse group of teachers teaching the class is what sets it apart from other schools. Another program strength is Del Campo's ability to plan lessons with a variety of information and activities to keep classes interesting.

Del Campo's AVID Statistics

— ENROLLMENT —

School 1,759
AVID 217

AVID students per grade:

Grade 9: 73
Grade 10: 67
Grade 11: 54
Grade 12: 23

AVID students in Honors/AP per grade:

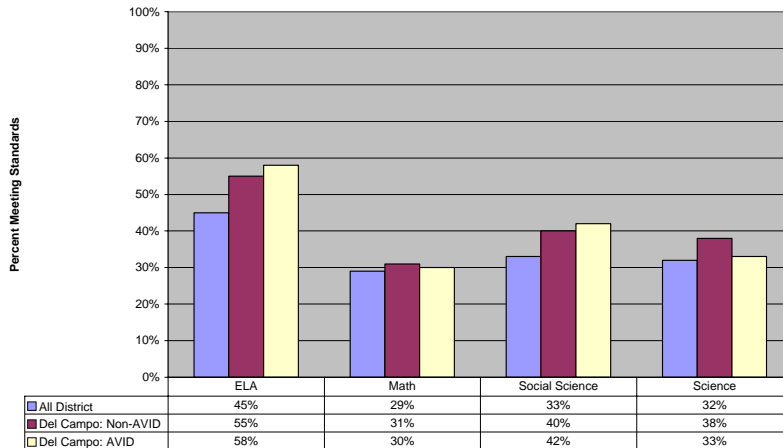
Grade 9: 25
Grade 10: 23
Grade 11: 52
Grade 12: 22

AVID students in Honors/AP classes:

| | | |
|-----------|--|----|
| Grade 9: | Honors English | 8 |
| | Honors Biology | 21 |
| Grade 10: | Honors English | 9 |
| | Honors World History | 19 |
| | Honors Biology, Physiology, or Chemistry | 19 |
| Grade 11: | Honors English | 9 |
| | AP Economics | 18 |
| | AP Art History | 6 |
| | AP U.S. History | 40 |
| | AP Statistics | 1 |
| | AP Spanish | 1 |
| | Honors Chemistry, Physics, or Physiology | 16 |
| Grade 12: | AP English | 19 |
| | AP Statistics | 4 |
| | AP Government | 7 |
| | AP Art History | 6 |
| | AP Spanish | 1 |
| | Honors Physics or Physiology | 12 |

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California State Standards Spring 2006
Percent Meeting Standards (Proficient or Advanced)
District AVID: 1041 Students, Del Campo AVID: 162



Advice to Other Schools

During its six years, Del Campo's AVID program has experienced tremendous growth and has much to share with a developing AVID site. First and foremost, administrative support is critical; so an AVID site cannot do it alone. Second, having an AVID counselor has not only made the job of the coordinator and teachers much easier, but it has also made the program more structured with standardized procedures for entrance, exit, and schedule changes. It is widely known at Del Campo that an AVID student's schedule should not be touched—**ever!** For a developing AVID site, it is important that a "weed-and-feed" system be in place (see below). Proper selection of students and **constant** reflection on their progress are also important.

For an established AVID site wishing to improve its program, the following advice regarding recruitment, progress monitoring, common practices, and standardized forms is offered:

- **Recruitment Model.** The San Juan Unified School District has devised a system whereby each high school is responsible for recruitment of AVID students from their feeder middle schools. High schools collect information from all students at each of the district's middle schools. If a particular student elects not to attend the high school that has collected his or her AVID information, that high school is responsible for forwarding the student's information to the high school of the student's choice. The recruitment system consists of the following components:
 - Each high school makes a presentation to all eighth graders in the district's middle schools.
 - Interest forms are collected from all students to identify who is interested in the program and who is not.
 - A recruitment list of all students who indicate an interest in the program is compiled.
 - Student data (grade point average, attendance, discipline, etc.) are gathered and entered on a spreadsheet.
 - After completing a recruitment training course, current AVID students (sophomores, juniors, and seniors) visit the district's middle schools to conduct interviews.
 - Each student's interview score is added to the spreadsheet.

AVID Statistics

— ETHNICITY¹ —

School (2006-2007)

| | |
|---------------------------|-------|
| African American | 4.9% |
| American Indian | 1.8% |
| Asian American | 2.8% |
| Hispanic/Latino | 10.5% |
| Filipino/Pacific Islander | 1.4% |
| White (Not Hispanic) | 78.0% |

AVID (2006-2007)

| | |
|---------------------------|-------|
| African American | 7.0% |
| American Indian | 3.7% |
| Asian American | 4.7% |
| Hispanic/Latino | 12.1% |
| Filipino/Pacific Islander | 4.7% |
| White (Not Hispanic) | 67.8% |

— API SCORES —

2002

| | |
|------------------|-----|
| School | 690 |
| SED ² | 599 |

2003

| | |
|--------|-----|
| School | 736 |
| SED | 659 |

2004

| | |
|--------|-----|
| School | 741 |
| SED | 635 |

2005

| | |
|--------|-----|
| School | 753 |
| SED | 691 |

2006

| | |
|--------|-----|
| School | 769 |
| SED | 707 |

¹School ethnicity statistics differ from those shown in the school profile due to date and source of data.

²Socioeconomically disadvantaged.

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- Information about students attending other high schools is forwarded to the appropriate high school AVID coordinator; Del Campo receives this information from the other high schools.
 - The site team meets to discuss applicants and make decisions.
 - Letters are sent to applicants.
- **Weed and Feed.** At the end of each grading period, some students are placed on probation based on their academic status and behavior. After the next grading period ends, students are reevaluated. If a student has not made acceptable progress, the coordinator, teacher, vice principal, counselor, parent, and student meet to discuss the student's status. At that time, a determination is made as to whether the student will remain in the program. If it is determined that a student will leave, in-house recruiting begins to fill the vacancy in the class. The school sends a schoolwide e-mail, including an AVID student profile, to all certificated staff on campus to request recommendations. After names are gathered, the school begins the process of interviewing and selecting students.
 - **Common AVID Practices.** Del Campo has streamlined most of its practices as a school. Although some ways of doing things in classes have been standardized, the school's model is to follow its students for years. This practice helps students who must change classes for one reason or another and helps tutors move smoothly from teacher to teacher.
 - **Standardized Forms.** Del Campo has agreed upon standardized AVID forms, such as tutorial request forms, binder checks, probation forms, and such, and uses them in classes rather than forms devised independently by different staff members.

About Del Campo's Schoolwide AVID Program

Approximately 25 percent of Del Campo's staff has attended AVID training in some capacity, whether at the AVID Summer Institute or the AVID Path Training. The site team has led staff development, training staff on such AVID methodologies as Cornell Notes; Inquiry and Costa's Levels of Questioning, Reading, and Writing; Philosophical Chairs; Team Building; Socratic Seminars; and tutorials.

As a result of increased awareness of AVID methodologies, AVID students now have access to all AP courses at Del Campo. Consequently, the school has increased the number of AP sections offered and added new AP courses—AP Art History and AP Statistics. In addition, it is now mandatory for all students, not just AVID students, to take the AP exam associated with the course they enroll in. Of the seven members of the school's leadership team, three have been trained in AVID methodologies, having attended either the AVID Summer Institute or Path Training. ©

AVID Statistics

— AP EXAMS —

AVID students taking AP exams:

Class of 2006: 5 of 10 students
(*graduates*) **50%**

Class of 2007: 25 of 30 students
(*current seniors last year*) **83%**

Class of 2007: 22 of 22 students
(*current seniors this year*) **100%**

Class of 2008: 52 of 52 students
(*current juniors this year*) **100%**

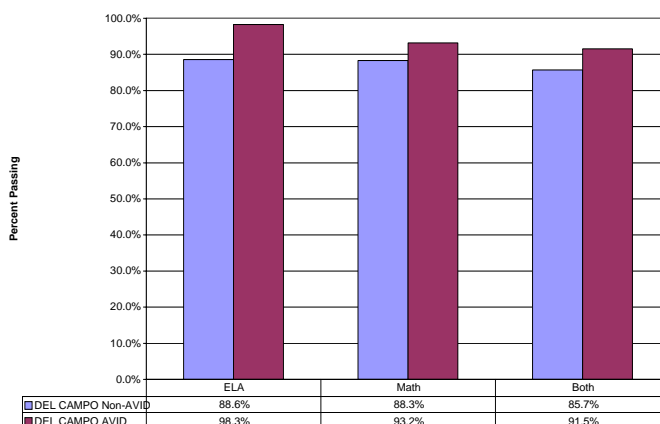
Class of 2009: 1 of 1 students
(*current sophomores this year*) **100%**

— COLLEGE ELIGIBLE —

Eligible for University of California:
Class of 2007 **11 of 23 students**
47.8%

Eligible for California State University
Class of 2007 **23 of 23 students**
100%

CAHSEE Comparison: Del Campo Class of 2008 - AVID and Non-AVID
San Juan Unified School District



Golden Sierra High School

Preparing Students for College and Career

Golden Sierra High School
El Dorado County
Black Oak Mine Unified School District
5101 Garden Valley Road
Garden Valley, California 95633
Audrey B. Keebler, Principal
Phone: (530) 333-8330
<http://goldensierra.bomusd.k12.ca.us>

2006 School Profile

Community: Rural Area

Grade Levels: 9-12

Enrollment: 705

Student Demographics:

- 1% African-American
- 3% American Indian or Alaska Native
- 1% Asian
- 0% Filipino
- 5% Hispanic or Latino
- 0% Pacific Islander
- 91% White

2006 API: 707 (up 84 points since 1999-00)

2006 AYP: Yes

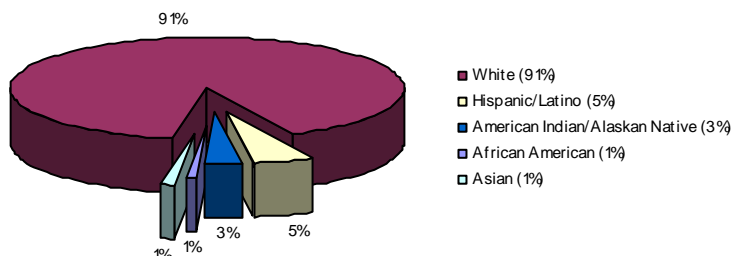
Free/Reduced Lunch: 18%

English Learners: 0%

The school met 10 of 10 criteria in 2006 for making adequate yearly progress (AYP).

When it comes to bringing relevance to students, Golden Sierra High School stands out as a model of what is possible when a small school thinks big. With the interests of its students in mind, the school successfully prepares students for college, and career. In terms of bringing relevance to high school courses, Golden Sierra's carpentry and construction program stands as an excellent model of a career-technical program that helps students connect what they are learning in school to real-world experiences.

**Golden Sierra
Demographics**



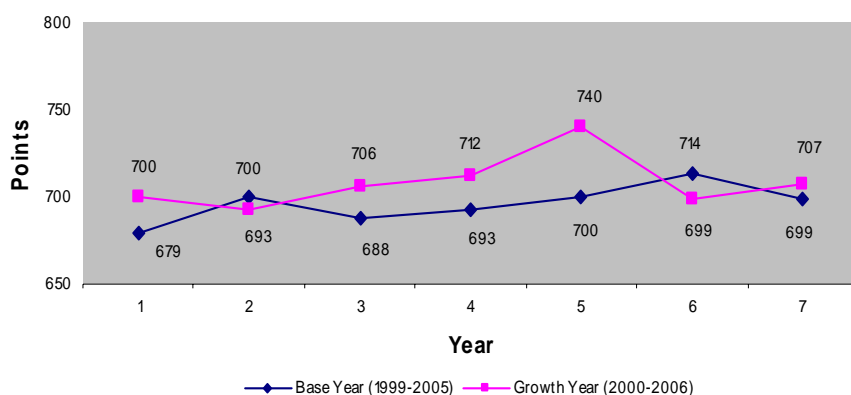
Relevance

Golden Sierra teachers underscore the relevance of courses using both individual and small-group work to prepare students for the different types of work and study environments they might encounter in their postsecondary lives. Special emphasis is placed on encouraging the “soft skills” of being on time, following directions, solving problems, and working on a team and independently. The skills students develop through the school's career-technical education programs are augmented by an

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understanding of the world beyond the classroom. Students see instruction as more relevant when they can choose various methods and educational settings to extend or demonstrate their learning. All staff members encourage projects beyond the traditional term paper so that students not only master technical detail, but show how their learning can be applied.

**Golden Sierra
API Trend**



Meeting the Needs of Students

Golden Sierra's Ultimate Cutting Edge program serves as the school's Regional Occupational Program (ROP) focused on construction technology, including carpentry. The Ultimate Cutting Edge is one example of defining relevance for students in relation to skills taught and future careers. The courses are designed to give students a solid foundation with skills in cabinetry and construction. The program at Golden Sierra follows state guidelines and drawn up by a construction advisory committee composed of members of the construction industry.

Students begin the program by learning the safe use and operation of hand tools, portable power equipment, and stationary woodworking machines. Having demonstrated competence with this equipment, students develop projects incorporating such skills as scale sketching, basic design, listing and labeling part sizes, and basic estimation. Students must complete a "Bill of Materials" test at 90 percent accuracy or better. Through this process, students demonstrate their competence in basic plan reading, mathematical calculations, and cost estimation. Work on other projects further develops students' skills in carpentry and construction and provides students with opportunities to apply their knowledge.

Students who advance in the program use their acquired skills to work on off-campus projects where they add to their knowledge by learning formwork, pouring footings and stem walls, finishing slabs, constructing sub-floors, framing walls, installing windows and doors, laying roofing, and completing finish carpentry. During the 2002-03 school year, students contributed their efforts to building a Habitat for Humanity house. In 2005 students worked on a 3,000-square-foot private residence in El Dorado County. Expectations for students in these classes are high. Not only must students observe school rules, but also model behavior and work habits expected of contractors and trades people on the job.

As part of developing an understanding of real-world, hands-on responsibilities and the relevance of their work, students must follow strict guidelines for punctuality and attendance as well as possess the necessary personal basic construction equipment and tools. Course instructor Larry Highberger assigns students to leadership roles, such as project leader or foreperson, in order to build teamwork and develop skills needed on job sites.

An annual highlight for students is the spring competition put on by the Sacramento Builders' Exchange. These competitions test students' construction skills and are evaluated and judged by professionals in the field. In 2004 Golden Sierra students won two of three awards at this competition. To prepare for these competitions, Highberger's students work with drafting instructor Fred

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Kendell and collaborate with students in Golden Sierra's award-winning drafting and design program to draw plans for their architectural projects using computer software.

Golden Sierra's career-technical education and ROP students say they feel prepared for a post-high school life of work, college, or another avenue of postsecondary training. The school's ROP students experience nearly 100 percent job placement with local employers eager to hire these highly skilled students. According to Highberger, 100 percent of his students who successfully complete the construction technology program can be placed with local contractors. Many of his former students have gone on to acquire their own contractor's license and now own their own construction businesses.

Additionally, Golden Sierra's students have demonstrated a 100 percent passing rate on the California High School Exit Examination; 92 percent of last year's tenth graders passed the exam. These results illustrate the school's success in equipping its students with the academic background they will need to land a secure and well-paying job as well as enter into postsecondary education or advanced training programs.

Golden Sierra's construction technology program illustrates how a strong career pathway in construction gives students choices—to stay in school, to prepare for construction work, to seek advanced construction training at the community college or trade school level, or to pursue a degree at a four-year university. Academic courses take on more relevance as students see how their learning can be applied to their interest and passion.

With its success, this program also has its challenges according to Highberger. The program's staff communicates to parents and students the long-range benefits of the program and shatters the stereotypical image of construction workers pushing wheelbarrows. Parents have an open invitation to visit classes, especially during open "wood lab" sessions. Highberger emphasizes the increasing demand, high salaries, and opportunities for well-trained, competent carpenters, contractors, and trades people in the construction field.

Other programs at Golden Sierra that provide relevant instruction and opportunities for students to connect course work with future educational or career plans include classes in automotive repair, drafting and graphic design, fire science, and journalism.

Advice to Other Schools

Highberger's advice to schools interested in developing or promoting such programs is to reach out to professionals in the community to establish advisory committees and to maintain and celebrate their involvement through recognition activities and events.🌀

Is Your School Library Relevant to Twenty-First Century Learning?

Parents of middle and high school students may remember the school library as an out-of-the-way room filled with books and tables where students quietly worked alone on book reports. Attempts at collaboration or simple verbal communication between students could incur harsh looks from the librarian or even banishment from the library.

But the Information Age has transformed the school library into a library media center that appeals to “millennials”—the tech savvy, team-oriented generation born between 1980 and 2000. Today’s library media center plays a significant role in delivering a relevant and rigorous education to middle and high school students.

In its publication [*School Libraries Work!*](#), Scholastic Library Publishing summarizes research and presents case studies that demonstrate the effect libraries have on student achievement. *School Libraries Work!* features an excerpt from the position statement of the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) on school libraries. In [*Why Care About School Libraries?*](#), the NCLIS claims “more than 60 studies have shown clear evidence of this connection between student achievement and the presence of libraries with qualified school library media specialists.”¹

A twenty-first century middle or high school library media center may have the following features:

- Library media specialists, highly skilled professionals who work closely with teachers and students to improve academic achievement
- A large room filled with natural light and comfortable sofas that make the space more appealing to students
- A substantial collection of books, including numerous works of fiction that pique students’ interest and encourage them to read, read, and read some more
- Periodicals, both academic and pop culture magazines of interest to adolescents
- Tables where students can gather to collaborate on group projects
- Technology in the form of numerous networked, state-of-the-art computers loaded with a wide variety of software and linked to high-quality printers
- Multicultural resources to enhance students’ understanding of their own heritage and other cultures and tolerance toward them
- Access to licensed databases and subscriptions to academic Web sources that enrich the core curriculum and are developmentally appropriate to adolescents
- A collection of information on colleges and careers
- Bookmarked Web sites that connect students to foreign language, sports, visual and performing arts, and other tween- and teen-related resources
- Displays of student artwork, writing, and science and History Day projects
- A distinct library page on the school’s Web site with helpful homework links related to assigned projects or a blog highlighting new Web resources



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¹ *Why Care About School Libraries?* Washington, D.C.: National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, 2005.

These modern-day libraries offer students opportunities before, during, and after school that can lead to academic success. They provide enrichment by integrating technology—considered essential by millennials—throughout a rigorous standards-based curriculum. Well-designed centers are accessible to all students, including those with learning disabilities and physical challenges. In addition, a library media center is often the place where struggling students receive academic interventions.

At many schools the library media center is the hub of the campus. Students may be completing homework, reading on sofas, meandering through the book stacks, studying for exams, and typing papers or conducting research on computers. Library media centers offer a quiet place for reading and writing, tutorials, meeting rooms for before- and after-school clubs and academic enrichment activities, and highly trained staff to provide personalized assistance to students.

As technology evolves, school libraries find themselves on the cutting edge of new trends. The emerging distance learning movement is prompting educators, particularly at the high school level, to consider how their school libraries might offer students the opportunity to take advanced or specialized courses or serve students who may not be physically present on campus (such as those in independent study or home-schooled students).

“School libraries are increasingly serving not just students, but families and the broader community.”

School libraries are increasingly serving not just students, but families and the broader community. Some schools offer students’ families access to their libraries before, during, and after school. For instance, every school day Gaspar de Portola Middle School in San Diego opens its library to students and their families 70 minutes before and 30 minutes after school. Many school districts are entering into creative partnerships with local governments to build community libraries on or adjacent to school campuses where students and the general public can have access to services. For example, in Sacramento County, the Elk Grove Unified School District and the City of Elk Grove jointly funded a community library on school grounds. The library, situated between Toby Johnson Middle School and Franklin High School, supports students at both schools while concurrently providing library services to Elk Grove citizens.

To sustain the interest of middle and high school students, learning must be relevant to the lives of adolescents. At a high-impact middle or high school, the entire school team works together to create an environment in which students are engaged as active learners and excited about their educational experiences on every level—academically, socially, and emotionally. Lessons, learning supports, and social activities are carefully planned to appeal to tweens’ and teens’ current interests and inherent curiosity about the world around them.

As the twenty-first century unfolds, there is a growing consensus that a strong school library plays a part in improving academic achievement and helping students excel in a standards-based curriculum. Above all, a well-designed library media center can make learning relevant to adolescents, keeping them interested in school and on the path to a lifetime of learning. ©

Contributors to this article

The following CDE staff members contributed to this article: Barbara Jeffus, Education Programs Consultant, and Dinorah Hall, Associate Governmental Program Analyst. For more CDE information on school library resources, visit <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/lb/>.

The Relevance of Counseling in High School

by George Montgomery

Educators are challenged in the twenty-first century to provide middle school students with quality curricula and practices that result in students who are literate, civic-minded, and prepared to understand the complexities of the real world. The question is often asked, “Why do behavior problems increase in middle school? Why do fewer middle school students turn in their homework? Why do more middle school students fail to pass classes?” If there were easy answers, middle schools would already be implementing successful programs that address these concerns. Although there are few simple answers to these complex problems, there are possibilities worthy of consideration.

In recent times it appears that educators have not adequately implemented teaching and learning practices that challenge students toward a higher order of thinking. Educators have concentrated on maintaining an educational structure that teaches to academic standards but frequently ignores the importance of developmental responsiveness.

Students thrive in positive learning environments that encourage high expectations, stimulate creative thinking, and demonstrate the relevance of learning in the classroom as it connects to the broader world. In this way, students not only attend school to learn academic subjects, but in fact go to school **to learn to live**.



According to William Glasser, we learn 10 percent of what we read, 20 percent of what we hear, and 30 percent of what we see.¹ However, we learn as much as 50 percent of what we both see and hear, 70 percent of what we discuss with others, 80 percent of what we experience, and 95 percent of what we apply or teach to someone else. This evidence suggests that educators should embrace as many opportunities as possible to engage students in different modes of learning, ranging from creative teaching techniques to innovative curriculum design. A relevant curriculum is one that prepares students to participate in and make sense of their world.

There are at least three positive, progressive steps to make academic curricula more relevant to students. First, develop a curriculum that embraces the whole student and respects the student's ability and potential to be active in and responsible for his or her learning. Second, encourage teachers to actively participate in focused, collaborative conversations with counselors. Third, implement an approach to teaching that develops students who are capable of thinking in the abstract and putting their thoughts into action.

As part of this challenging process, counselors can work collaboratively with teachers using materials and activities to develop academic content that engages students and stimulates them to explore course work as it applies to the real world. Currently, 19 middle and high schools in California have piloted a program called [The Real Game California](#) that features a series of career exploration activities connected to the California content standards. This career development curriculum is the latest version of the

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internationally acclaimed Real Game Series and was developed by the [California Career Resource Network](#) (CalCRN) to reflect the California economy. All 19 schools participating in the pilot project are continuing and expanding the program. For example, this year Ed Harris Middle School in the Elk Grove Unified School District is expanding its Real Game California curriculum from one class to five classes. In the Woodland Joint Unified School District (WJUSD), the board of trustees approved the Real Game California program as the official curriculum resource to provide career education to all students in grades five through eight.

According to Michael Gangitano, counselor at Lee Middle School in the WJUSD, The Real Game has truly changed the paradigm at his school by setting the stage for a “working” classroom where students not only “punch in” (in order to learn the importance of being on time) but also purchase items they want and need (in order to learn the value of money). Another resource from the CalCRN is the [California CareerZone](#). This online tool enables students to assess their career interests and then explore California occupations related to those interests.

“The more educators can provide skills
for learning, skills for earning,
and skills for living, the more relevant
their work will be”

As a result of experiencing these activities, students are more engaged in school, more connected to their school, more aware of occupations connected to academic course work, and—most importantly—more in tune with how these experiences create relevant meaning in their lives as they begin a journey of self-discovery and lifelong learning. The combination of collaboration among counselor, teacher, and student as well as programs like The Real Game California, create powerful teaching and learning for youths.

Legislation recently signed by Governor Schwarzenegger (Assembly Bill 1802 [Chapter Number 79, Statutes of 2006]) will provide school districts with additional funding to increase the number of counselors serving students in grades seven through twelve. This new funding will enable counselors to provide supplemental services to all students and additional services to those students who are Far Below Basic in math, English, or both. With the myriad of social and emotional issues that impede the learning process of youths, these additional resources will be a welcome relief to counselors challenged with heavy caseloads and greater demands for increased student academic performance.

When counselors and teachers connect middle school academic curricula to real-world applications, students gain problem-solving skills, learn risk-taking strategies, and attain the lifelong goal of continuous learning. The more educators can provide skills for learning, skills for earning, and skills for living, the more relevant their work will be in helping students successfully navigate the challenging path toward personal fulfillment and professional success. To occupy positions of leadership in the twenty-first century, students must be equipped with an education that is relevant to the world in which they live.©

¹Glasser, William (1992). William Glasser Institute Newsletter.

About the author

George Montgomery is an Education Programs Consultant with the California Department of Education's Counseling, Student Support, and Service-Learning Office. He can be reached at (916) 319-0540 or GMontgomery@cde.ca.gov. For more information on CDE counseling and student support resources, visit <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/cq>

Worth a Click

The following Web sites provide additional information on relevance.

Curricular:

California Department of Education Standards & Frameworks

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st>

Presents California's standards and frameworks.

California Science Teachers Association

<http://www.cascience.org>

Provides information to and training for California's science teachers.

National Council for Geographic Education

<http://www.ncge.org>

Enhances the preparation of geographic educators with respect to their knowledge of content, techniques, and learning processes; develops, publishes, and promotes the use of curriculum, resources, and learning materials;

National Council for the Social Studies

<http://www.ncss.org>

Features information on academic instruction; includes ideas on how to emphasize the relevance of social studies to students.

National Council of Teachers of English

<http://www.ncte.org>

Highlights a number of research studies and resources including information that speaks to the need for bringing relevance to middle and high school English/language arts curricula.

National Council of Teachers of Mathematics

<http://www.nctm.org>

Among other things, presents information on using real-world problems to teach mathematics; special sections for middle and high school teachers.

National Science Teachers Association

<http://www.nsta.org>

Provides information to middle and high school science teachers including ideas on how to make lessons relevant to students' lives.

Technology:

Environmental and Spatial Technology (EAST)

<http://www.eastproject.org>

Recognized as an exemplary program in the United States Department of Education's National Technology Plan; offers pedagogical training for teachers, technical training for students, and assistance for effectively integrating technology in service learning projects.



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Gen Y

<http://www.geny.org/>

With funding from the Verizon Corporation, provides seventh grade students in California's Central Valley with the opportunity to become nationally certified in technology literacy using the TechYES program; any public Title I school in selected Central Valley counties that serves 7th grade students is eligible to apply for funds and resources.

Technology Information Center for Administrative Leadership (TICAL)

<http://www.portical.org>

Includes tools, resources, tutorials, and case studies on integrating technology for “digital school” leaders.

Visual and Performing Arts:

California Department of Education

Visual and Performing Arts Guidance

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ca/vp/vapaguidance.asp>

Provides information and resources for implementing high quality K-12 visual and performing arts education programs.

Career/Real World Connections:

California Career Resources Network

<http://www.californiacareers.info>

Features a number of career development related tools to bring meaning to learning.

California Department of Education

Health Career Education

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/ct/hc>

Helps students gain insight into the health care industry, explore health-related areas, and prepare for career entry/postsecondary education.

Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education

<http://www.entre-ed.org>

Presents information for teachers, instructors, program developers, and others who help students of all ages find their own entrepreneurial opportunities.

Partnership for 21st Century Skills

<http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/index.php>

Encourages schools, districts, and states to advocate for the infusion of twenty-first century skills into education; provides tools and resources to help facilitate and drive change.

The Real Game California

<http://www.californiacareers.info/downloads/rgc.pdf>

Highlights career development curriculum aligned with California content standards and designed to engage students learning connected to the real world.

Service Learning:

Learn and Service America

<http://www.learnandserve.gov>

A program of the Corporation for National and Community Service; provides funding, training, and technical assistance to K-12 schools to facilitate service-learning.

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National Service Learning Clearinghouse

<http://www.servicelearning.org>

Provides support for strengthening schools and communities using service-learning techniques and methodologies.

Project-Based Learning:

Project-Based Learning Checklists

<http://pblchecklist.4teachers.org>

Helps teachers create age-appropriate, customizable project checklists for written reports, multimedia projects, oral presentations, and science projects; checklists are designed to help teachers start using project-based learning in their classrooms.

Multicultural Experiences:

California Department of Education Foreign Languages

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/fl>

Provides information on developing foreign language proficiency in students; presents California's curriculum framework and instruction materials for foreign language instruction.

California Department of Education Reading/Language Arts

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/rl/l>

Presents a list of recommended literature for children and adolescents in grade K-12; ability to search by grade, age, and culture.

National Association for Multicultural Education

<http://www.nameorg.org>

Features information and resources on multicultural education.

School Libraries:

California Department of Education School Libraries

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/lb>

Highlights information and resources for keeping school libraries current and relevant for today's students.

Scholastic Library Publishing

<http://www.scholastic.com/librarypublishing>

Features the publication *School Libraries Work!*, a Research Foundation Paper that explains the impact school libraries have on student achievement.

U.S. National Commission on Library and Information Science

<http://www.nclis.gov>

Provides guidance and support to strengthen the relevance of libraries and information science.

Join the High School E-mail List

Join the CDE High School listserv at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gc/hs/hsmail.asp> to receive notices about high school related information and upcoming *High School!* periodical issues.

To view current and past *High School!* periodical issues visit:
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/nl/hischlnwsltr.asp>.

Please send your comments or suggestions to HiNet@cde.ca.gov. Your ideas and suggestions are welcome.

HIGH SCHOOL!

Middle and High School Improvement Office
California Department of Education
1430 N Street, Suite 4401
Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone: (916) 322-1892
Fax: (916) 322-3390

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/nl/hischlnwsltr.asp>

Rozlynn Worrall, Manager
Christopher Dowell, Editor
Dinorah Hall, Layout/Design

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